

# House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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*For immediate release*      Contact: Loren Dealy, HASC Communications (202) 226-6339  
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## Taylor Responds to Rumsfeld's Remarks

***WASHINGTON D.C.—Representative Gene Taylor (MS), Ranking Member on the Projection Forces subcommittee, made the following statement today regarding comments made by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.***

“Today Secretary Rumsfeld spoke to a group of soldiers in Kuwait. When a junior enlisted soldier from the Tennessee National Guard raised a question about why he and his buddies had to scavenge steel from junkyards in order to make armor for their vehicles, Secretary Rumsfeld gave a explanation of why armor isn't on every vehicle and also responded by telling the young soldier that ‘armor is not always a savior’.

“I appreciate Secretary Rumsfeld taking the time to explain the shortage of armor to this young man, but the sad truth is that this soldier is right. Today, the Army reported that 24% of the Humvee fleet in the CENTCOM theater is not armored.

“When I visit Iraq I ride around in an armored vehicle and I am sure the Secretary does, as well. That should be our standard. If it is good enough for the big shots, it is good enough for every American soldier.

“After three years of war soldiers should not be digging in scrap heaps to find armor for their vehicles. We must unleash the power of the American Industrial Base to solve this problem now because every day this isn't fixed we needlessly lose soldiers and marines.

“You only have to go up the road to Walter Reed Army Hospital and speak to the men and women who have been wounded by homemade bombs to understand just how important vehicle armor is in the kind of combat we are facing in Iraq. Our soldiers need our support, and their loved ones expect us to do all we can to protect them.

“We in the Congress have repeatedly begged the Secretary to let us help fix the problem. Secretary Rumsfeld has repeatedly appeared before this committee and responded to our questions by saying that he is relaying the services' requirements to Congress and our troops are getting what they need.

“If this is the case, then why does a junior enlisted soldier from the Tennessee National Guard feel he has to stand before the Secretary of Defense and ask the same question?”

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